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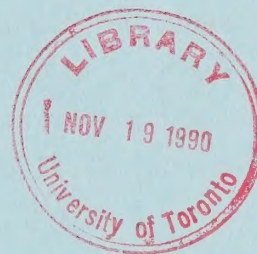
Family policy in Quebec



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# FAMILY POLICY IN QUEBEC



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Political and Social Affairs Division

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## FAMILY POLICY IN QUEBEC

### INTRODUCTION

In the past 25 years, Quebec family life has changed so much that the provincial government has developed a set of family policies. These include programs to support families with young children, such as subsidized child care services, supplements to the federal Family Allowance Program, and extended parental leave, as well as direct incentives to raise the birth rate. While other Canadian provinces have developed social programs to assist families with young children, only Quebec has initiated explicitly "pronatalist" policies, which encourage people to have children.

Recent demographic and cultural changes in Quebec society have been dramatic. First of all, from 1965 to 1985, the marriage rate, or the percentage of single people likely to get married before the age of 50, declined from 85.9% to 49% for men and from 93.5% to 51.7% for women. This trend away from marriage may not necessarily imply a rejection of relatively permanent relationships, but only that many more couples are living together without legal marriage. Furthermore, one-third of all births in Quebec occurred outside marriage in 1988 compared to 10% in the late 1960s.(1)

Secondly, the Quebec divorce rate rose significantly from the 1960s to the late 1980s. Prior to 1968, there was no provincial divorce court in Quebec and divorces had to be processed through the federal government. At that time, the only acceptable ground for divorce was adultery.(2) In the early 1960s, before the federal divorce law was

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(1) Francine Descarries and Christine Corbeil, "New Family Structures," UNESCO Courier, Volume 42, July 1989, p. 43.

(2) Anne-Marie Ambert, Divorce in Canada, Academic Press, Toronto, 1980, pp. 21, 22.

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liberalized, there was one divorce in Quebec for every ten marriages in the same year; by 1988, however, the ratio was closer to one in three.<sup>(3)</sup> While the Canadian divorce rate has also risen, the rise in Quebec has been more dramatic.

Finally, Quebec women historically had one of the highest birth rates in the Western World. In the late 1920s, the fertility rate of Quebec women (the average number of children born to each woman) was approximately 40% greater than that of other Canadian women, but since the late 1960s it has been declining faster than the Canadian rate. Each woman in Quebec was producing 1.47 children in 1988, well below the replacement rate of 2.1.<sup>(4)</sup> If we look at the 1988 crude birth rate (the number of births in a year per 1,000 population), we can see that the Canadian rate was 14.5 while the Quebec rate was 12.7.<sup>(5)</sup>

Although birth rates have declined in most western industrialized societies within the same period, the decline of Quebec rates since the 1960s has been more dramatic. It has been attributed to the cultural changes of the "Quiet Revolution," when the Catholic Church lost much of its control over Quebec society, the education system became more secularized, young people began to place more emphasis on occupational success, and young women played down their traditional role as wives and mothers.<sup>(6)</sup> Another reason for the lower birth rates could relate to young women's perceptions of their mothers' family experience. After seeing their mothers become emotionally and physically exhausted raising large families, daughters were determined not to relive their mothers' lives.

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(3) Descarries and Corbeil (1989), p. 43.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Statistics Canada, "Quarterly Demographic Statistics, April-June 1989," Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, October 1989, p. 16.

(6) R. Lachapelle and J. Henripin, The Demolinguistic Situation in Canada, Past Trends and Future Prospects, The Institute for Research on Public Policy, Montreal, 1982, pp. 116-117.

Quebec demographers and policymakers have expressed some concern about divorce and one-parent families, and the decline in fertility has caused nationalists to speak of the "crisis of depopulation." Previous projections had suggested that the Quebec population would decline more rapidly in the future than would the Canadian population. These projections were based on interprovincial migration statistics from 1976 to 1981, however, as well as the 1981 Canadian census. With so much Anglophone emigration from the province resulting from Quebec's language policies, 1976-1981 turned out to be a unique period in Quebec's history. When the same calculations were made from 1981 to 1986, Quebec's proportion of the Canadian population was projected to decline only slightly, from 26% in 1986 to 24.6% by 2011. Yet the first scenario remained in people's minds.(7)

Some journalists and policymakers have expressed a concern about declining Quebec population and the implications for French language and culture. Not surprisingly, the same concern about its language and culture has not been shown in Anglophone Canada even though birth rates have declined and the population is aging there as well. The different perceptions of the implications of declining birth rates is revealed in reactions to the Report of the Demographic Review, released by the Minister of National Health and Welfare on 12 December 1989. The Demographic Review was a three-year study of the changing age and sex structure of the Canadian population and its impact on the economy and the environment, the changing family, the role of immigration, and the contributions of immigrants to Canadian society. When the Report was discussed in the media the day after its release, Francophone and Anglophone newspapers placed quite different emphases on its findings. While the Toronto Globe and Mail contained a lengthy article on various aspects of the Review, beginning with the headline "Population Will Grow until 2026, Study Says,"(8)

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(7) Health and Welfare Canada, Charting Canada's Future: A Report of the Demographic Review, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1989, p. 3.

(8) Graham Fraser, The Globe and Mail (Toronto), 13 December 1989, p. A5.

Le Devoir (Montreal) produced a front page article headed "Le Québec deviendra de plus en plus minoritaire au Canada."<sup>(9)</sup> Almost the entire article discussed the population trends in Quebec, which were presented as a serious problem despite the fact that the Review projected only a 1.5% decline in Quebec's population relative to Canada's over 25 years. Considering that the Demographic Review covered a much broader scope than population projections, the focus on Quebec's population was probably an indication of provincial concern about the issue.

Statistics Canada indicated that the 1989 birth rate in Quebec had risen slightly from 1988, as had the rate in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Yukon.<sup>(10)</sup> According to a report in The Globe and Mail, this increase in Quebec was only among immigrants and Anglophones rather than among Francophones.<sup>(11)</sup>

In comparison to that of many European countries, the birth rate in Quebec is not particularly low. For example, in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, East Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, birth rates are lower than in Canada and Quebec.<sup>(12)</sup> Furthermore, while the 1989 birth rate in Quebec has risen slightly, to 13.0 per 1,000 population, the rate in Newfoundland has now become the lowest in Canada - at 12.8 per 1,000 population. Yet, though there is concern about young families leaving Newfoundland, there appears to be little anxiety over declining fertility. In Quebec, however, it is perceived to be a major problem by many journalists, academics and policy makers.

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(9) Paul Cauchon, Le Devoir (Montreal), 13 December 1989, p. 1.

(10) Statistics Canada (1989).

(11) Victor Malarek, "Quebec Grapples With How to Maintain French-Speaking Majority," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), 30 October 1989.

(12) Statistics Canada, Births and Deaths. Vital Statistics, Volume 1, Ottawa, September 1988, p. 71.

## FAMILY POLICIES IN CANADA AND QUEBEC

Social scientists writing about "family policy" have indicated that although most social or economic policies impinge upon family life, Canada has never had a systematic and explicit family policy.<sup>(13)</sup> There are individual social programs and income tax deductions designed to assist families to rear children. Since 1918, for example, the federal government has allowed taxpayers to deduct an amount from their taxable income for a dependent spouse and children, and since 1944 the federal Family Allowance Program has provided monthly benefits to assist families with the costs of raising dependent children. Federal programs may not always be consistent in their goals, however.

Under the Unemployment Insurance Program (UI), 15 weeks of maternity benefits replacing up to 60% of previous earnings (to a maximum) are paid to mothers who have been in the labour force for a specified length of time and meet the residence requirements. But only 55% of pregnant women in the labour force actually draw maternity benefits for the full period.<sup>(14)</sup> In April 1989, the federal government promised to add ten weeks of parental leave to maternity benefits, although this would depend on amendments to the federal Unemployment Insurance Act and provincial labour legislation.

The federal government also provides child tax credits to low-income families with dependent children, and income tax deductions for working mothers who pay for child care services and are able to obtain receipts. Under the Canada Assistance Plan, federal and provincial

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(13) Brigitte Kitchen, "Family Policy," in Families in Canadian Society, 2nd edition, edited by Maureen Baker, McGraw Hill Ryerson, Toronto, 1990; Susan McDaniel, "Family Policies for Canadians: In Principle," prepared for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa, January 1989; Joseph C. Ryant, "The Family, Law, and Social Policy," in Marriage and the Family in Canada Today, edited by G.N. Ramu, Prentice Hall, Scarborough, 1989.

(14) Georges Mathews, "European Pro-Natalist Policies and Family Policy in Canada," Update #5 of the Review of Demography and its Economic and Social Implications, Health and Welfare Canada, Ottawa, Winter 1988, p. 74.

governments cost-share child care and child welfare services for lower-income families. This discussion of "family policy," however, will be restricted to policies and programs to help alleviate the financial costs of raising children and to encourage couples to bear children.

Compared to other provinces, the Quebec government has developed a more comprehensive range of family-related policies. For many years, Quebec has varied the federal family allowance by the child's position in the family and the child's age, paying a higher rate for older children. This means that Quebec families are paid a supplement above the federal rate of \$32.74 per month. In Quebec, for two children under 12 in Quebec, a mother received about \$74 a month in 1988, while in Ontario, a mother received \$65.48. In 1986, Quebec family allowances were converted to a tax credit payable in advance through the income tax system, while federal benefits are mailed monthly to mothers or the custodial parent.<sup>(15)</sup>

In 1988, Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa established a new Ministry of State responsible for family life. In the same year, Quebec family allowances became exempt from income tax, and a new tax credit, not tied to child care expenses, was established for children under 6. Families with two or more children under 18 years of age were also offered a \$7,000 interest-free loan to help buy a first home costing less than \$75,000. At the time of the 1988 budget, the government also promised to build 60,000 new child care spaces over seven years; this promise was later rescinded when the federal Bill C-144, the Canada Child Care Act, failed to pass through Parliament.<sup>(16)</sup> In 1989, however, an additional \$2 million was allocated to encourage day care centres to open around-the-clock.<sup>(17)</sup>

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(15) Health and Welfare Canada, Inventory of Income Security Programs in Canada, January 1988, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1989.

(16) Malarek (1989).

(17) André Picard, "More Paid Parental Leave Promised by Bourassa," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), 14 September 1989.

Of the family policies in Quebec, incentives to raise the birth rate have received the most publicity. In May 1988, the Quebec government started to give parents \$500 at the birth of the first and second children and \$3,000 for third and subsequent children. It later promised to raise this bonus to \$1,000 for the second child and \$4,500 for third and subsequent children, with payments made annually until the child began school. This bonus is disbursed as an advance on income tax credits, which means that it is not taxable.

While introducing the May 1988 budget, the Quebec Finance Minister, Gérard Lévesque, told the National Assembly: "I believe it is important to encourage Quebecers to have large families and to dispel financial uncertainty and instil greater confidence in the future. Our Government has an abiding concern for the financial welfare of Quebec families who care for children, sustain society and transmit its values and culture."(18)

In September 1989, the Quebec government announced that it would offer an additional 27 weeks of parental leave to parents with three or more children. In addition, the province would grant unpaid leave of 34 weeks for the first or second child, as well as five days off for childbirth and five days leave for parents to attend to "child-related responsibilities." These leave provisions are expected to cost the Quebec government \$20 million a year. When Premier Bourassa made this announcement, he said that increasing the birthrate "is the most important challenge of the decade for Quebec ...because our future is imperilled." Elaborating the other commitments his government has made to increase the Francophone population, Bourassa claimed that these policies "would ensure the future of French in North America and the place of Quebec within Confederation."(19)

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(18) Robert Sheppard, "Quebeckers Offered \$3,000 Bonus to Have Larger Families," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), 13 May 1988.

(19) Picard (1989).

In addition to family-related programs, the Quebec government has attempted to use immigration as a way of delaying the aging of its population. It has announced its intention to increase the number of immigrants until the proportion reaches 25% of the Canadian intake. Historically, Quebec's share has been about 17%.(20) Preference will definitely be given to immigrants coming from French-speaking countries. Some observers are uneasy about these new immigration objectives because they feel that additional immigration could lead to increased racial disharmony or threaten the racial homogeneity of Quebec. Already, members of some ethnic communities feel that they are not adequately integrated into Quebec society, and point to the under-representation of ethnic minorities in provincial positions of power.(21)

Despite some of the rhetoric, concern about declining birth rates in Quebec is probably less about demographic change than the weakening of Quebec's political power within the Canadian federation. Secondly, declining fertility causes an aging population, which some fear will eventually raise the per capita cost of social programs and cause serious economic as well as cultural problems for Quebec. Some analysts have suggested that a small society like Quebec cannot survive both declining population growth and increasing cultural diversity. Quebec can either arrest cultural dispersion by creating barriers to foreign cultural influences or expand its youthful population.(22)

The Quebec government has initiated few barriers against non-French influences other than legislation ensuring that French is the official language of instruction and stating that commercial signs must be in French only. Instead, policies have focused on Francophone immigration and incentives to raise the birth rate. The assumption behind these policies is that sheer numbers of Francophones will prevent any further

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(20) Malarek (1989).

(21) Ibid.

(22) Cary Caldwell and Daniel Fournier, "The Quebec Question: A Matter of Population," Canadian Journal of Sociology, Vol. 12, Number 1-2, pp. 37.

decline in the French language and culture and in the power of Quebec within Canada. Yet there are indications that the power of Quebec within the Canadian federation, rather than declining, has strengthened in recent years. For example, the number of federal Cabinet Ministers from Quebec has increased, and the income gap between Anglophone and Francophone Canadians is diminishing.(23)

The "crisis of depopulation" may have been overstated by some authors.(24) The assumption which lies behind many articles is that a declining birthrate necessarily means a decline in economic productivity, consumption, investment and employment. This assumption is debatable, however. Studies for the Demographic Review contradicted this idea when they showed that there was no correlation between economic well-being and population growth for OECD countries between the years 1960 and 1985. The Review also concluded that, while increasing the birth rate will not necessarily improve the economic well-being of Canadians (as measured by the Gross Domestic Product), other changes could, such as encouraging more women to enter the labour force or paying women and visible minorities higher wages.(25) Falling birthrates and an aging population will be sure to have an impact on future programs, but European countries such as Sweden and West Germany have preserved social programs and economic productivity despite both problems.

## **FAMILY AND POPULATION POLICIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

In order to assess the potential effectiveness of Quebec's family policies, we will examine some specific family policies in other

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(23) Jac-André Boulet, Language and Earnings in Montreal, Economic Council of Canada, Ottawa, 1980; Jac-André Boulet and Laval Lavallée, "L'évolution des disparités linguistiques de revenus du travail au Canada de 1970 à 1980," Economic Council of Canada, Discussion Paper 245, Ottawa, 1983.

(24) See especially Georges Mathews, Le choc démographique: Le déclin du Québec est-il inévitable? Boréal Express, Montreal, 1984.

(25) Health and Welfare Canada, Charting Canada's Future (1989), pp. 10-11.

nations. Several Western European countries have initiated indirect pronatalist policies, such as family allowances, state-funded child care, and parental leave programs that are more generous than either Canada's or Quebec's. In France, for example, the state has made a considerable investment in family benefits and child care services. Maternity leave is available to employed mothers at 90% of their previous salary for 16 weeks. French family allowances are considerably higher than Canada's, and begin before the birth of a child. The French government also pays child care allowances of \$377 per month for parents who work outside the home or \$457 per month for a parent who stays home with a child up to three years old.<sup>(26)</sup> Furthermore, France has a system of state-funded day care centres, family day care homes, nursery schools for children aged 3 to 6 (écoles maternelles), before- and after-school programs, and part-time care for children of stay-at-home mothers. About 90% of children aged 3 to 6 are enrolled in écoles maternelles for the full day.<sup>(27)</sup> Despite France's support for families with dependent children, the birth rate fell from 18.2 per 1,000 population in 1961 to 17.2 in 1971, and down to 14.1 in 1986, although it remains higher than that of other Western countries.<sup>(28)</sup> Nevertheless, by the mid-1980s French policy makers were concerned about the low birth rate and aging population.<sup>(29)</sup>

In Sweden, where both parents are expected to work for pay and both are equally responsible for supporting their children, 90% of women work outside the home. Family policies include 50 days special pregnancy leave at 90% of salary, two weeks paternal leave at childbirth, up to 18 months parental leave at 90% of salary and generous leave provisions for working parents with sick children. Visiting nurses and

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(26) Josée Boileau, "La filière française," Châtelaine, Vol. 30, July 1989, pp.115, 116.

(27) Government of Canada, Task Force on Child Care, Report, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, 1986, pp.259-261.

(28) United Nations, Demographic Yearbook 1978, 1986, New York, United Nations, 1979 and 1988.

(29) McDaniel (1989), p.24.

other health professionals are also available to care for sick children at home. Parents are provided with two weeks with pay when a child is placed in a day care centre or changes facilities, and two days per child each year to visit the child's school. Parents with children under 8 are also permitted to work a six-hour day with commensurate loss in pay but no other penalty.

Swedish day care centres are run by municipalities but are regulated by the central government. They are open much longer hours than Canadian centres - often 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. - to allow for the different starting times of parents' work. There is also a system of family day nurseries in caregivers' homes.<sup>(30)</sup> Despite all these employment-related benefits for working parents, Sweden's birth rate fell from 13.9 per 1,000 population in 1961 to 12.2 in 1986, as Table 1 indicates.<sup>(31)</sup>

After the Second World War, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union experienced low birth rates, partly due to an imbalance in the sex ratio as a result of the war and subsequent low marriage rates, but also due to socialist policies which de-emphasized the family as an important institution. In recent years, pronatalist policies in some Eastern European countries have been explicit; they include special bonuses at the birth of each child, restrictions on birth control and abortion, higher taxes for childless adults, and restrictions on divorce. For example, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary have severely restricted the use of abortion and Romania has been taxing childless adults over 25 years of age who are in the labour force.<sup>(32)</sup> The ban on birth control, abortion and divorce in Romania was only recently lifted with the death of Nicolae Ceausescu in December 1989.

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(30) Rita Ann Reimer, "Work and Family Life in Sweden," Social Change in Sweden, Swedish Information Service, New York, April 1986; Swedish Embassy, Ottawa, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Report, June 1989.

(31) United Nations, 1979 and 1988.

(32) A. Romaniuc, Current Demographic Analysis Fertility in Canada: From Baby-Boom to Baby-Bust, Cat. 91-524 E, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1984.

TABLE 1: CRUDE BIRTH RATES IN SELECTED COUNTRIES, 1951-1986.  
(Births per 1,000 population)

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1986
Bulgaria	21.1	17.4	15.9	14.1	15.5
Canada	27.1	26.1	16.8	15.3	14.7
Quebec	30.0	24.0	14.4	14.8	13.0
France	19.7	18.2	17.2	14.9	14.1
Hungary	20.2	14.0	14.5	12.5	12.2
Romania	25.1	17.5	19.5	17.1	15.5
Sweden	15.5	13.9	14.1	11.1	12.2

Sources: Statistics Canada. Canada Year Book 1970-71 and 1980-81, Ottawa Ministry of Supply and Services; Statistics Canada. Births and Deaths 1986, Cat. 84-204, Ottawa, September 1988; United Nations. Demographic Yearbook. New York: United Nations, 1979 (Historical Supplement), 1988.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of pronatalist policies. Some policies are too recent to have influenced long-term trends and others are so indirect that it is hard to say that changes in fertility have been caused by them and not some other factor. In Romania for example, fertility rates rose in the 1970s, but then declined to a lower point than before the introduction of pronatalist policies.<sup>(33)</sup> Yet in countries with a severe housing shortage, giving priority to couples with children when allocating apartments has served as a relatively successful pronatalist policy.<sup>(34)</sup> In most countries, however, the inducements to reproduce have typically been insufficient to counter reasons to limit fertility. Pronatalist policies appear to be more successful in influencing the timing rather than the number of births.<sup>(35)</sup> Couples who have postponed childbearing may decide to reproduce with the implementation of financial incentives, but will probably not have more children than they initially planned.

Most social scientists have concluded that indirect pronatalist policies have not been successful in raising fertility because decisions to reproduce depend on many factors. These include the economic climate, availability of jobs, educational plans, opportunities to combine family and work, accommodation costs, the availability of contraception and abortion, and prevailing attitudes about women's role and the desirability of family life. In other words, the decision not to have children is a complex one and cannot be easily altered by policymakers.

Pronatalist attitudes and policies tend to be prevalent in societies with predominantly Catholic or Moslem institutions, and where kin groups have a strong influence on individual behaviour. Furthermore, where

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(33) Françoise Lodh, "Explaining Fertility Decline in the West: a Critique of Research Results from Social Sciences," for the Vanier Institute of the Family, Ottawa, 1987.

(34) Paul Demeny, "Do Pronatalist Policies Work?" Public Opinion, April/May 1988, p. 89.

(35) Romaniuc (1984).

women's education and employment opportunities are restricted to family or female-based activities, fertility rates are likely to be high. Countries with high fertility tend to be less developed industrially and less urbanized; they also tend to have high rates of infant mortality and maternal death.<sup>(36)</sup> On the other hand, societies in which substantial numbers of women are well-educated and participate in the labour force are likely to have higher average ages of marriage, lower fertility, and lower maternal and infant mortality rates.

### PRONATALIST POLICIES AND WOMEN

Women have traditionally paid a heavy price for large families. As we mentioned, high fertility rates are associated with high rates of infant mortality and maternal death, poverty, low levels of female education, low rates of labour force participation for women, and increased levels of housework and child care for mothers. For these reasons, women are less likely than men to see declining birth rates as a social problem, and more likely to view declining fertility as an advantage for women.<sup>(37)</sup>

In Canada, juggling paid work and family responsibilities has proven difficult and has become a major source of stress for women.<sup>(38)</sup> For one thing, the organizations in which most women work have been designed by men and tend to be more supportive of men's values, preferences and career patterns than women's. Women are expected to adjust to a work world which implies that work is the only important factor in

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(36) Stanley P. Johnson, World Population and the United Nations, Challenge and Response, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

(37) Lyse Frenette, "La Baisse de la fécondité québécoise: quelques réflexions féministes," Action nationale, May 1988, pp. 258-262.

(38) Graham S. Lowe, Women, Paid/Unpaid Work, and Stress: New Directions for Research, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa, March 1989.

employees' lives and which makes few allowances for personal or family responsibilities.

Although most employed women can receive maternity leave and Unemployment Insurance benefits when they give birth, the lack of parental leave or leave for family responsibilities in many workplaces implies that children are women's responsibilities rather than that of both parents. With little or no employment leave for family illness, female employees are often forced to use vacation leave to care for sick children or disabled family members. Child care services are often unavailable, but when they are, they are often of low quality or are unaffordable. Lack of employer and government attention to the family responsibilities of employees implies that reproduction and child raising are merely family concerns rather than a benefit to the entire society.

Women will be unlikely to want to bear and raise more children without substantial changes to the structure of work. Such improvements as increasing maternity benefits to a higher percentage of previous earnings, more extensive parental leave, publicly-funded child care services, longer vacations, and more extensive leave for family illness may create an environment more conducive to childbearing. Reinforcing the concept that children are of social value appears to be an essential first step to raising birth rates, but judging from the experience of Sweden, there is no evidence that improving parental benefits and providing state-funded child care services will be enough to encourage working women to have large families, though they may persuade some women to have one child or even two.

Direct pronatalist policies without more public support and employment-related reforms could actually make economic equality more difficult for women. If women were encouraged to have more children, they would need to take more frequent and longer maternity leaves which could reduce any gains in employment equity. Higher birth rates would also create larger families, which could lead to a demand for higher wages. Especially sole-support mothers would find it more difficult to support their children. This could increase their financial dependence on the state, unless women's wages improved or more fathers accepted custody of the children.

In 1985, the Quebec Advisory Council on the Status of Women produced a paper which commented on the advantages of smaller families for women, including greater financial autonomy and improved retirement benefits. They questioned the efficacy of state intervention in fertility matters, considering European countries' lack of success with pronatalist policies, and the high divorce rates and low marriage rates in Quebec.<sup>(39)</sup> In April 1986, the Quebec Government's Committee on Family Policy, which had a majority of women, expressed similar reservations about efforts to combat declining birth rates in Quebec.<sup>(40)</sup>

In May 1988, an Angus Reid poll found that two-thirds of Quebecers think Canada's population should be higher, whereas only half of Canadians outside Quebec think the national total should grow. This poll was taken a week after Quebec introduced its new "baby bonuses." However, only 23% of Quebecers said that they would be more inclined to have children as a result of the cash bonuses. Two-thirds of Canadians in the poll said that they were in favour of encouraging more adoption from foreign countries to boost the population.<sup>(41)</sup>

In a democracy such as Canada, it may not be possible to control fertility behaviour. The experience of France and Sweden indicates that making the social environment more friendly to children by providing more generous family allowances, maternity leave and child care services will not necessarily increase the fertility rate. Since pressure groups generally encourage policy makers to act on perceived social problems, there will undoubtedly be other pressure groups who do not accept the aims set forth by the politicians. In Quebec, employed women with young

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(39) Suzanne Messier, Refléxion sur les politiques de population. Incidences de la baisse de la fécondité québécoise sur la situation des Québécoises, Research Service, Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Quebec, April 1985.

(40) Government of Quebec, Le soutien collectif recommandé pour les parents québécois, Report of the Consultation Committee on Family Policy, Quebec, April 1986.

(41) Joan Bryden, "Canada Needs to Have Millions More People - Survey Respondents," The Gazette (Montreal), 4 June 1988.

children are likely to oppose pronatalist policies because they will be the most affected. Despite the recent changes in family life, women still tend to retain most of the responsibility for childrearing and housework when they enter the labour force.

Indeed, fertility decline could easily be viewed as a positive demographic trend. In developing countries, for example, a lower rate of population increase is associated with modernization, and is often a national goal. Having fewer children in each family provides more space and privacy for each family member, possibly more parental attention for each child, a higher per capita income, more money to spend on the children's education, and more time for women to work to raise the household income.<sup>(42)</sup> Lower fertility is also associated with lower rates of infant mortality and maternal death. But these positive aspects of fertility decline have been overlooked in Quebec, while the potential negative implications for culture have been emphasized.

## CONCLUSION

In an economic climate of restraint, when birth rates are likely to fall, pronatalist sentiments tend to become more prevalent. Pro-family ideologies are sometimes used by governments to withdraw costly services, such as long-term care in an institution, which used to be provided free by families.<sup>(43)</sup> In the case of Quebec, however, the falling birthrate is being used to increase public support for nationalist policies. The birth rate has become a rallying point for action to increase Quebec's power within the Canadian federation and to prevent further erosion of culture and language.

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(42) Margrit Eichler, Families in Canada Today, 2nd edition, Gage, Toronto, 1988, p.47.

(43) Robert Glossop, "Family Time or Prime Time? Jobs, Leisure and Relationships in the 1980s," A Plenary Address to the Leisure in Motion Conference of the B.C. Recreation Association and the National Recreation and Parks Association, Vancouver, 11 May 1986, Vanier Institute of the Family, "Perspective Series," Ottawa, 1986.

If the Quebec birth rate increased substantially (which is dubious), if the province accepted and retained more Francophone immigrants, and if overseas adoptions were encouraged, the Quebec population might not decline compared to the Canadian population. But an increased population does not guarantee the retention of a society's culture. In fact, increasing Francophone immigration could lead to more third-world immigrants whose customs might substantially alter the nature of Quebec society. Furthermore, direct pronatalist policies might prove to be more effective among certain ethnic minorities rather than Quebec-born Francophones, as appears was the case in 1989. In addition, incentives to raise the birth rate might be most effective among families with insufficient funds to raise their children, which would place more pressure on social services.

Declining fertility in Quebec, as elsewhere, is correlated with rising levels of female education; increased labour force participation of women; postponed marriage; improved contraception; postponed pregnancies; values such as individualism, self-development and occupational success; and higher costs of accommodation and child care. This implies that policies designed to raise the birth rate artificially, without adequately dealing with these other social, ideological and economic factors, are doomed to failure. If Quebec policymakers want to ensure cultural retention, they would probably be more successful focusing on culture rather than reproduction.

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